

## Joni Mitchell: music and feminism

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BIOGRAPHY

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# Joni Mitchell



## 'I Wasn't a Protest Singer When It Was Fashionable'<sup>1</sup>:

### Joni Mitchell: Music & Feminism By: Ruth Charnock

In Richard Curtis' 2003 film *Love Actually*, Emma Thompson's beleaguered wife, Karen, is wrapping presents with her soon-to-be-unfaithful husband, Harry (Alan Rickman). Playing in the background is Joni Mitchell's anti-Christmas Christmas song 'River', with Mitchell singing of a 'selfish and sad' lover who has 'gone and lost the best baby that [she] ever had.'<sup>2</sup> Listening to 'River', Harry and Karen have the fol-

lowing exchange:

Harry: 'What is this we're listening to?'

Karen: 'Joni Mitchell.'

Harry: 'I can't believe you still listen to Joni Mitchell.'

Karen: 'I love her and true love lasts a lifetime. Joni Mitchell is the woman who taught your cold English wife how to feel.'

Harry: 'Did she? Oh, well, that's good, I must write to her sometime and say thanks.'<sup>3</sup>

Here, Karen's attachment to the singer<sup>4</sup> registers for her husband and the audience as anachronistic – Harry cannot be-

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lieve that his wife *still* listens to Joni Mitchell. In the 2010 film, *The Kids Are All Right*, Annette Bening's character Nic sings 'All I Want' at the dinner table, accompanied by sperm-donor Paul (Mark Ruffalo) - much to the embarrassment of her children and partner Jules (played by Julianne Moore). Heartfelt and tuneless, Benning's rendering is an especially uncomfortable moment in a film constructed around such moments. The scene registers both Ben-

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ning's nostalgia for the girl who 'spent half of high school in my room crying to that album [*Blue*]'<sup>5</sup> and her growing distance from her partner, who looks first bemused then horrified by her partner's off-key reverie.

In Zooey Deschanel's *New Girl*, Jess (played by Deschanel) lies fetal on her floor, listening to 'River' on loop, further inscribing its cultural status as a breakup song. There is a communal sigh of relief when Jess is finally persuaded to turn the record off. As housemate Winston puts it "I liked it when you played it for the first time at 10 o'clock last night. I liked it a little bit less at 2 a.m., and now I'm kind of hoping that the sun comes up, thaws that river, and that woman drowns."<sup>6</sup>

Excessive, embarrassing, too sensitive, Mitchell's songs have made frequent appearances in popular culture to signify the over-attached woman: lost in the music and drowning in her own feelings. Figured in these spaces, hers is music to wallow in, music for breaking up, breaking down, for when you feel heartbroken - even when it is unclear who has done the breaking. Yet the

## Feminists have been cranky about Mitchell - especially about her refusal to identify herself as a feminist

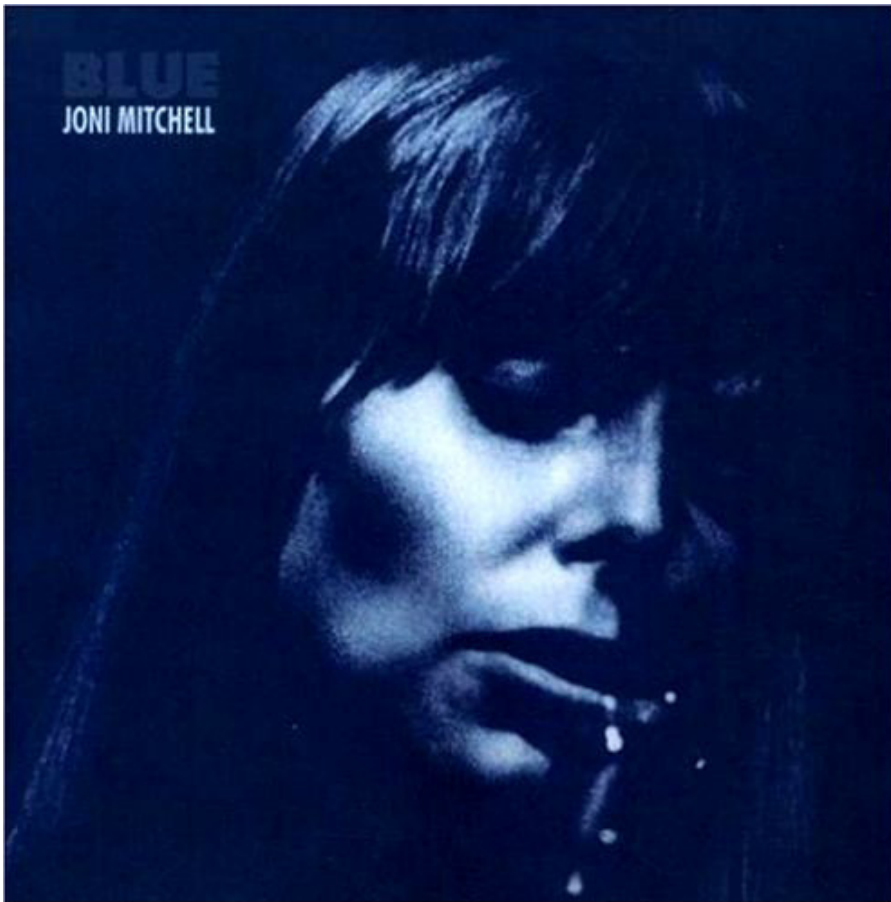
acuity and range of feeling in Mitchell's work is simplified into female mourning in the depictions above. Moreover, such accounts underplay the breadth, subject matter and influence of Mitchell's oeuvre, not least the role her music has played and continues to play in the cultural imaginary of the 1960s and 70s, in particular. This is not to fall into the same error as Alan Rickman's Harry – Mitchell's music has lost none of its punch or relevance and, arguably, the majority of her lyrics have stood the test of time - even if the production on certain of her albums has not. As Sheila Weller has said 'her music [is] a form of sociology, of social history. You can read many of the cultural chang-

es of the '60s generation in her songs.'<sup>7</sup>

Specifically, this article will attend to Mitchell's uneasy relationship with feminism,<sup>8</sup> a relationship where Mitchell often comes off as fractious, recalcitrant and, as Weller puts it, 'the dame', the tough, cranky, boastful woman living for her craft<sup>9</sup> - rather than as a feminist role-model. It will also consider 'Woodstock' as a case example of Mitchell's influence, but also her uneasiness with regards to becoming a cultural relic.

Considering Mitchell's conversations with feminism (and, somewhat less problematically, the imbrication of her music with environmental activism), we also turn our attention to the questions of identity politics, representation and efficacy inevitably raised when we think about music and social activism. If Mitchell is cranky about feminism then, occasionally, feminists have been cranky about Mitchell – especially about her refusal to identify herself as a feminist. This refusal works to disrupt easy narratives about Mitchell as an exemplary figure for other women, feminist or not. As Michelle Mercer aptly sums it up: '[Mitchell





has] already taken enough blame for being a muse to every flaxen-haired girl who picked up a guitar and mistook emotional turbulence for art.’<sup>10</sup> However, what is indisputable is the extent to which Mitchell’s music represents social discontent and desire for change – from the environmentalism of ‘Big Yellow Taxi’ (‘they paved paradise and put up a parking lot’), and ‘Woodstock’ (‘we’ve got to get ourselves back to the garden’<sup>11</sup>), to critiques of marriage in ‘Song for Sharon’ or ‘My Old Man’ where Mitchell announces that she doesn’t ‘need

a piece of paper from the City Hall’<sup>12</sup> to ratify her relationship, to state of the nation polemics such as 1994’s ‘Sex Kills’: ‘and the gas leaks/and the oil spills/and sex sells everything/and sex kills.’<sup>13</sup>

## Unmarried mothers

Born 1943, in Alberta, Canada the young Joni Mitchell (then Roberta Joan Anderson) was an only child. As Mitchell has described, her moment of artistic conversion came when she was hit by polio aged 9<sup>14</sup> and was reinforced by a high-school English teacher, who told Mitchell, ‘if you can paint with a brush, you can paint with words.’<sup>15</sup> At school, Mitchell learnt guitar and spent the early 1960s playing folk music in Saskatoon cafes whilst attending art college. Aged 21, she fell pregnant by college boyfriend Brad MacMath, moved to Yorkville, Toronto and gave birth to a daughter in secret, whom she placed in foster care, intending to raise her as soon as she was able. She met folk singer Chuck Mitchell one month later in March 1965, and the pair married in June. They

formed a musical duo together. According to Joni Mitchell, Chuck had promised to adopt her daughter and raise her as his own as soon as they were married. However, Chuck Mitchell has always denied this account.<sup>16</sup> Whatever the truth behind this episode, Mitchell was not reunited with her daughter until 1997. 'Little Green', written in 1965 but not appearing until 1971's *Blue* recounts Mitchell's experience of signing her daughter's adoption papers: 'child with a child pretending/ weary of lies you are sending home/ so you sign all the papers in the family name/ you're sad and you're sorry but you're not ashamed.'<sup>17</sup> Mitchell would return to the subject of unmarried mothers in 'Magdalene Laundries'<sup>18</sup> on 1994's *Turbulent Indigo*, which depicts a woman 'sent [...] to the sisters/for the way men look at me.'<sup>19</sup>

## Early Career

The Mitchells became a touring couple, playing mostly folk songs, although it was during this period that Mitchell's own writing took flight. Among others which would

appear on her first album *Joni Mitchell*, in 1965-66 Mitchell wrote 'The Circle Game' (later recorded by folk singer Tom Rush) with its haunting, disarmingly lullaby-like refrain 'the seasons, they go round and round/and the painted ponies go up and down/we're captive on the carousel of time'<sup>20</sup> and 'Urge for Going'<sup>21</sup>, arguably the first of Mitchell's bid-for-freedom songs which would reach their culmination in 1976's *Hejira*.

By 1967, the Mitchells had separated and Joni Mitchell moved to New York City, propelled by a burgeoning interest in her songs from more well-known artists such as Rush, Buffy Sainte-Marie and Judy Collins. Spotted by David Crosby in a Florida bar in 1967, by the end of the year she had moved to Los Angeles to start her recording career in earnest. From 1969 to 1976, Mitchell would make the run of albums that she is still most known for, from 1969's *Clouds* (featuring 'Both Sides, Now' and 'Chelsea Morning'), through *Ladies of the Canyon* ('Woodstock', 'Big Yellow Taxi'), *Blue*, *For The Roses* ('You Turn Me On, I'm A Radio'), *Court and Spark*, *The Hissing of*

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*Summer Lawns and Hejira.*

## **Dylan vs. Mitchell**

According to Weller, starting her recording career, Mitchell was terrified that ‘her reputation and her prospects would be hurt by the revelation of the baby’:

*Four years earlier, Bob Dylan – who’d come to New York, letting it be thought he was an exotic vagabond – had been humiliatingly exposed by Newsweek as a middle-class Jewish fraternity boy; still, after a brief retreat from the public eye, his glamour was undiminished [...] Even in rebel-loving 1960s rock, a young man could be forgiven for having a less tortured and romantic past than he’d invented for himself, but a young woman had to fear retribution for having a more tortured and romantic past than the public knew about.<sup>22</sup>*

Dylan is often mentioned in the same breath as Mitchell, although this associative traffic is by no means two-way. That is to say, Mitchell is often known by comparison with Dylan but Dylan, apparently, can

stand without comparison. Indeed, on several occasions Mitchell has been referred to as a ‘female Bob Dylan’<sup>23</sup>, a label she has rightly bridled at although she has frequently cited him as an influence.<sup>24</sup> Such comparisons speak to the uneasiness of quantifying Mitchell in her own right, an uneasiness one could also argue is displayed in Sheila Weller’s *Girls Like Us: Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Carly Simon and the Journey of a Generation* which suggests not only that the three musicians fulfill attainable womanly archetypes (a highly problematic statement when you consider the apparent diversity of these women from each other and the fact that they are all famous, white, middle class and wealthy) but also that their stories should be both interwoven with and made exemplary of a generation’s experience to be understood.

At the time, Mitchell didn’t cultivate a heavily-mythologised backstory for herself in the way that Dylan did, although others would create narratives for her – the Californian sunshine girl, the fatal enchantress, the Canyon lady, as this gushing 1974 pro-



file for *Time* magazine attests:

*She is the rural neophyte waiting in a subway, a free spirit drinking Greek wine in the moonlight, an organic Earth Mother dispensing fresh bread and herb tea, and the reticent feminist who by trial and error has charted the male as well as the female ego.*<sup>25</sup>

Such descriptions testify to the shiftiness of Mitchell's public persona, but also to critical attempts to pin her down through recognizable images of femininity: the ingénue, the goddess, the mother, the cranky oracle. Stuart Henderson has argued that, '[a]t stake in the late 1960s and early 1970s was the central concern for [...] her audience that 'Joni Mitchell' was a stable identity which could be categorized, recognized, and understood'<sup>26</sup>, a concern that plays out in *Time*'s dramatization of Mitchell which succeeds only to affirm the singer's unquantifiability. Much of this concern was founded on an investment in Mitchell as an 'authentic' public figure, an investment borne out of an understanding of Mitchell

as a confessional singer-songwriter<sup>27</sup> that women, particularly, could listen to in order to make sense of their own emotional experiences, a version of Mitchell that takes us back to Emma Thompson's 'cold-hearted English wife' who was 'taught how to feel' by Mitchell.

### Women's liberation movement

Investments in Mitchell as an authentic, knowable figure should be read as emerging, to a large extent, from the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 70s, and especially the emphasis within radical feminism on, 'the sexual politics of personal life'<sup>28</sup>, as Alice Echols puts it. From the late 1960s to mid-1970s, Mitchell made a se-



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ries of allusively autobiographical albums whose lyrics were oblique enough that listeners could interpellate their own emotional experiences, but specific enough that they could also feel in intimate connection with Mitchell.<sup>29</sup> Reprise's promotional campaign for *Ladies of the Canyon* (1970) capitalized on but also helped to construct this story of emotional solace via Mitchell. An advert, which ran in *Rolling Stone*, features the story of a fictional character 'Amy Foster', a middle-class hippy in a state of ennui 'toying indifferently' with 'the enormous antique ring on the index finger of her left hand' to avoid 'lapsing into that state of bored listlessness she'd found herself in so frequently of late.'<sup>30</sup> Newly dumped by a man ('David') who, a month later, has married, Foster is contemplating leaving town when a delivery boy knocks at her door with a copy of Mitchell's new album. Amy is soothed:

*As much as they [the songs] downed her by reminding her all too vividly of her now-irrevocably-consummated relationship with David, Willy and Conversation were*

*somehow reassuring — there was someone else, even another canyon lady, who really knew. Amy began to feel a little better.*<sup>31</sup>

Whilst the branding of Mitchell's ideal listener is clearly contrived to appeal to aspirational female listeners with a purchase on the Laurel Canyon lifestyle, this should not take away from the fact that Mitchell's albums provided a language of experience hitherto unexpressed by a female singer. Women had sung about sex and relationships before, obviously, but few had written of their own sexual pleasure *and* sung of it with Mitchell's candour and sensitivity to the perils of sexual life. As in 'Coyote', which depicts Mitchell's weakness to the charms of a man who has 'a woman at home / another woman down the hall' and 'seems to want me anyway', a cad who 'picks up my scent on his fingers, while he's watching the waitress's legs'<sup>32</sup>, Mitchell depicts, with sometimes discomforting acuity, the vagaries, power-plays and seductions of heterosexual relationships. Bradford Martin argues that, at

the time, such expressions constituted a radical cultural act, in and of themselves: *[I]n the early 1970s, the sheer novelty of a woman singing her own compositions about her own experiences often sufficed to generate cultural resonance. [...] Critics noted that such intense self-concern may have come off as egotism in a male artist, but for a woman it constituted an act of self defiance.*<sup>33</sup>

Whilst Martin identifies the ‘cultural resonance’ of the female singer-songwriter (a label Mitchell dislikes) during this period, Sheila Weller more explicitly associates Mitchell’s music with the second-wave feminist movement in America, drawing a parallel between the fact that by the same summer Mitchell was writing *Blue* (1970) ‘[a]lmost every national magazine had published an article on feminism.’<sup>34</sup> However, Weller does not fully explore Mitchell’s oft-voiced distaste for the feminist movement, understandably, as to do so would involve unpicking the enjoyable and, to some extent, convincing portrayal of Mitchell as an imagined sister to a generation of American women. Whilst Weller foregrounds the

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feminist movement in her work, she bats off Mitchell’s denial of the appellation: ‘Joni saying ‘I’m not a feminist’ is endearingly funny to me! [...] Actions speak louder than words - she was one of the *major feminist role models* of her time.’<sup>35</sup>

Mitchell would beg to differ. Responding to her categorisation as a ‘Woman of Rock’ in 1998, she commented ‘genderization is a form of bigotry.’<sup>36</sup> In the same year, musician and feminist Ani DiFranco baulked at the incongruity between Mitchell’s lived experiences and her claimed politics:

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*What intrigues me most about Joni Mitchell is that she is such a notable feminist in terms of her own life, yet she refuses to publicly support feminism and would dispute my, or anyone else's, use of the word in reference to her. She has, in fact, nothing but disparaging words for 'the feminists,' describing 'them' as a militant political faction that only 'made things worse.'*<sup>37</sup>

No doubt DiFranco would have been further bemused by Mitchell's comments in a 1997 interview with Morrissey, where she opined that feminism was 'ineffective from the beginning':

*I remember when the word first came up. As a matter of fact, Warren Beatty and Jack Nicholson and I used to go at the time for dinner [...] and they were amused that I'd never heard about the feminists. I was kind of a media dropout. [...] I was much more inner-world oriented.*<sup>38</sup>

Here, Mitchell is 'one of the boys', hanging out with those legendary 1970s lotharios Nicholson and Beatty, in a scene that pours cold water on the sisterly warmth of the *Ladies of the Canyon* advert.<sup>39</sup>

## Protest songs

The questions raised by Mitchell's public scorn for feminism deserve more attention than I can give them here. However, certainly one of the most salient is about the triangulated relationship of the singer, the song and the sociocultural event. Does it *matter* (and what does this 'matter' mean?) if a songwriter does not manifest in person the political stance that is assumed by listeners in their songs? Whilst Mitchell's songs undoubtedly represent stances that could be called 'feminist', we also have to recognise the cultural work of appropriation and perhaps misplaced identification that goes into labelling them as such. Furthermore, the at times oblique nature of Mitchell's lyrics of the 1960s and 70s has saved her songs from the curse of kitsch cultural artefaction that besets a self-identified feminist track such as Helen Reddy's 'I Am Woman' (1975). If we are to view Mitchell's songs as, in many instances, protest songs (and let us not forget that protest can manifest in many guises), then these are rarely songs tied to one historical event.<sup>40</sup> The protest



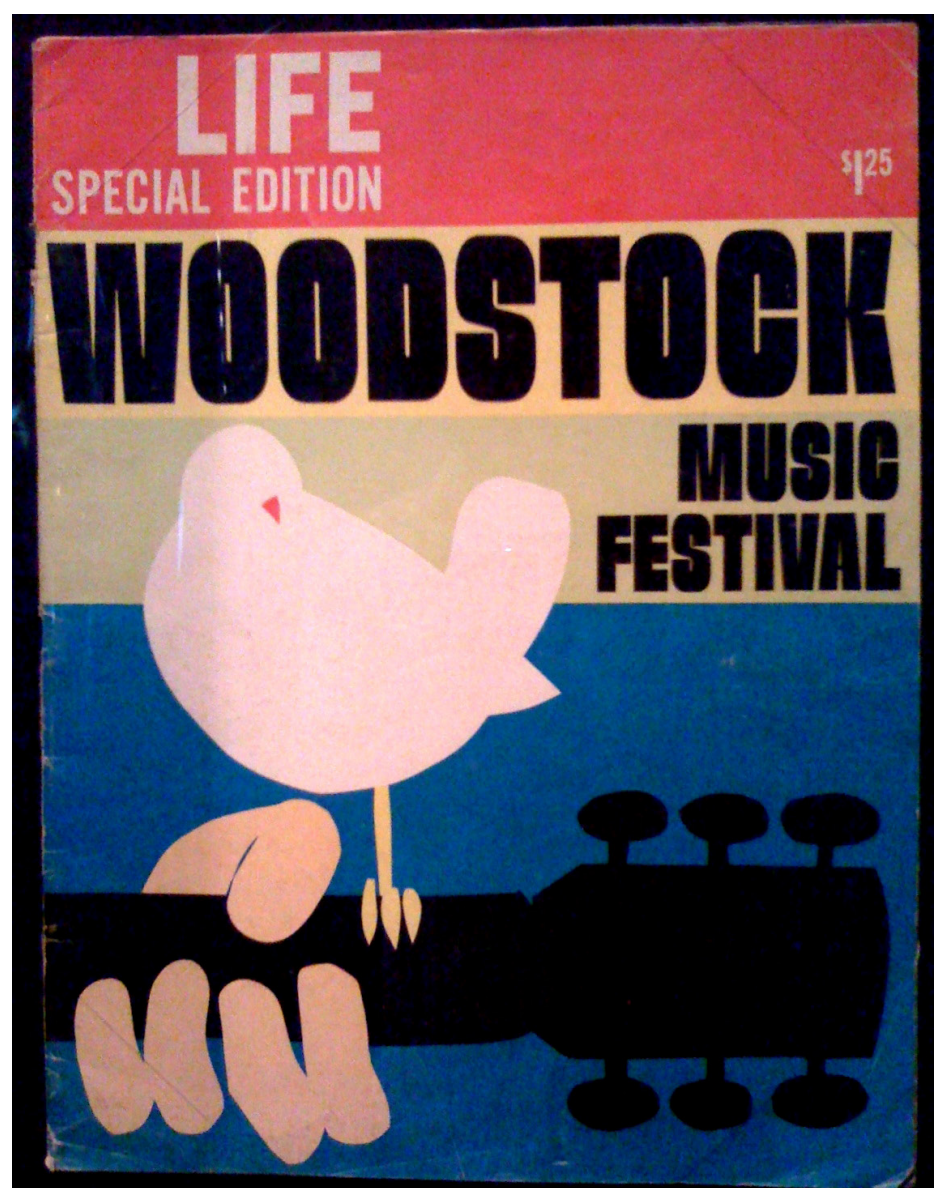
songs that can be understood outside of their original moment are the protest songs that last, according to Deena Weinstein: 'A protest song [...] has a far longer shelf life if it is oblique, since it can be heard generations later merely as a song relieved of the baggage of a protest that may no longer be relevant or popular.'<sup>41</sup> True though this might be, it does not excuse Amy Grant's cover of 'Big Yellow Taxi.'

### Woodstock

Ironically it was a song about an event that Mitchell did *not* experience first-hand that would soundtrack the American counterculture's last big shout of the '60s: the Woodstock Music and Arts Festival, 1969. Famously, Mitchell missed the festival because she was due to appear on *The Dick Cavett Show* the following day and her manager, David Geffen, was afraid that Mitchell would not make both. Watching the festival on t.v from a hotel room in New York, Mitchell wrote 'Woodstock', an almost invocatory call to arms where Mitchell dreams of the 'bombers riding shotgun in the sky, turning

into butterflies above our nation', of 'half a million strong' moving towards Woodstock with the knowledge that they are 'caught in the devil's bargain' of the Viet Nam war. The song shivers with anticipation, a feeling that something is happening: 'maybe it's the time of year, maybe it's the time of man.'<sup>42</sup>

David Crosby (who later recorded the





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## Mitchell has expressed her sense of the failure of the 'Woodstock generation' and

song with Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young) has said that, with 'Woodstock', 'Mitchell contributed more to everybody's understanding of that event than anyone else did.'<sup>43</sup> 'Woodstock' became an anthem, capturing the utopian spirit of the event, immortalising, as Margot A. Henriksen puts it: *[t]he 'back to the garden' sensibility [which] signified the withdrawal of the youth culture from the out-of-balance American system of technology and signalled the counter-cultural desire to restore the balance in re-*

*lations both in human society and between humans and nature.*<sup>44</sup>

However, in the past two decades Mitchell has expressed her sense of the failure of the 'Woodstock generation' and criticised those who, in states of false nostalgia, fetishize the event. In a 1991 interview, Mitchell recounts a conversation with 'a self-admitted yuppie':

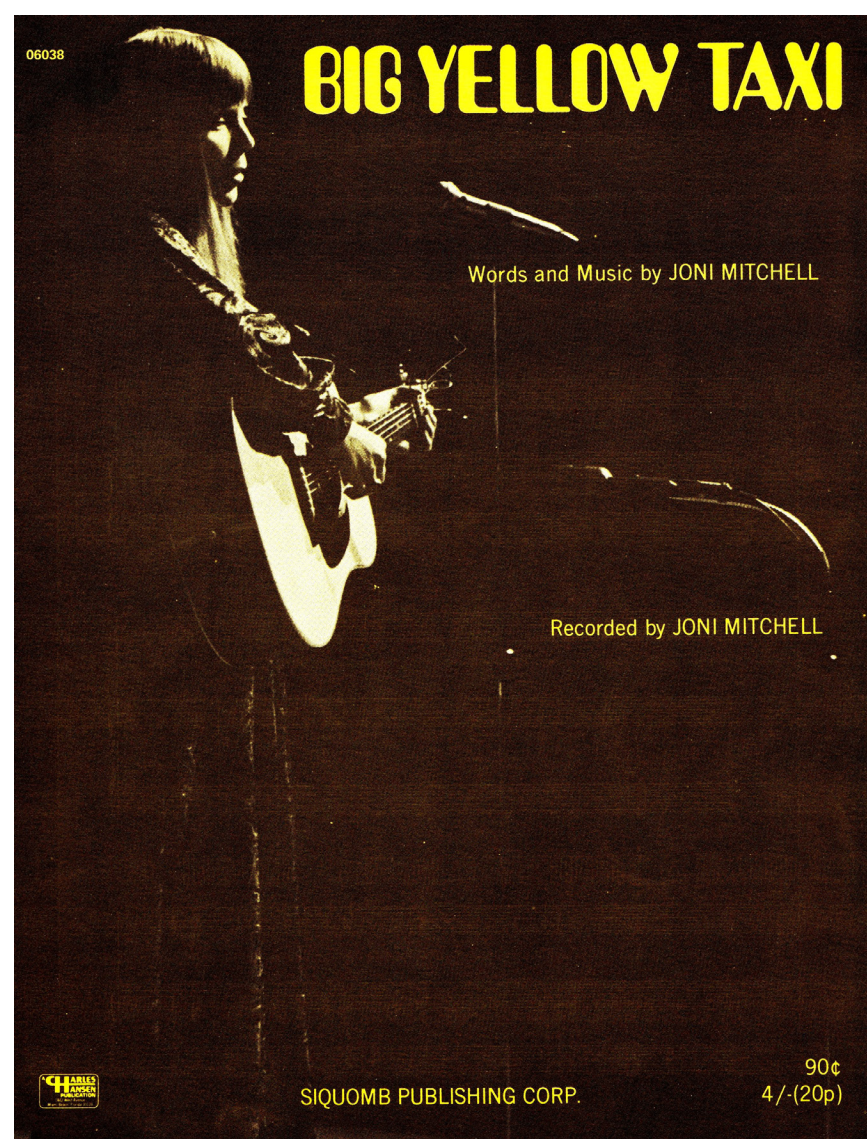
*He was in some financial position, and inside this yuppie was this hippie dying to get out. And he was very romantic about the Sixties. He and I had an argument kind of late at night, because he was really praising us. And I kept saying to him, 'Yeah, but we failed.' And he kept saying 'Yeah, but at least you did something. Like, we did nothing.' I said 'Look, the thing is, don't just ape our movement. Don't do hippie poses. Look at us. Admit to yourself that we only took it so far. Build from where we left off. 'I know my generation - a lot of them, they're getting old now, and they want to think back fondly, they want to kid themselves. A lot of them think, 'Yeah, we were the best.' That's the kiss of death. That's nongrowth.*

*And also that's very bad for the world.*<sup>45</sup>

In a move not dissimilar to her resistance to being branded as a feminist, Mitchell has resisted being branded as a flower-child curio, wheeled out of retirement by made-for-television documentaries to provide pithily wistful comments about the era. Instead, she remains a vociferous commentator both on the 1960s and 70s and on contemporary politics.

### Big Yellow Taxi

Mitchell has also referred to her other most famous protest song, 'Big Yellow Taxi' as 'a nursery rhyme', saying of the most famous phrase 'they paved paradise and put up a parking lot' that it has been 'a utilitarian slogan [...] a good little workhorse.'<sup>46</sup> Whilst Mitchell stands by the ecological message of the song – which she followed by playing at the first ever Greenpeace benefit concert along with James Taylor in 1970 – her occasional flippancy when it comes to the most popular items in her back catalogue speaks to a desire to appear as relevant rather than as a relic. As such, an account



of Mitchell's politics has to pay attention to recent contributions, such as the 2007 ballet *The Fiddle and the Drum* - a collaboration between Mitchell and the Alberta Ballet which reworks some of her most explicitly political songs from the 1980s and 90s. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Mitchell clearly demonstrates her continuing investment both in world politics and environmental issues:



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*“Humbly I hope we can make a difference with this ballet,” [...] speaking of her outrage about the foreign and environmental policies of the United States. “It’s a red alert about the situation the world is in now. We’re wasting our time on this fairy tale war, when the real war is with God’s creation. Nobody’s fighting for God’s creation.”<sup>47</sup>*

## Going back to the garden

Although the wars and times have changed, Mitchell has referred *en passant* to ‘Woodstock’ in recent years to convey her sense of the current climate: ‘The West has packed the whole world on a runaway train. We are on the road to extinguishing ourselves as a species. That’s what I meant when I said that we’ve got to get ourselves back to the garden.’<sup>48</sup>

In the title track from Mitchell’s 1976 album *Hejira*, she is in flight from a ‘possessive coupling’ in which ‘so much could not be expressed.’<sup>49</sup> This is a fitting sentiment from an artist who has often bucked at the constraints of categorisation whether as a feminist, a singer-songwriter, or a genera-

tion’s ‘voice.’ Mitchell’s songs are undoubtedly touchy: outspoken, contradictory and often cranky – but are too often misread as touchy-feely: saccharine, sappy sentiments. Her songs document the difficulty of making the right choices and the pleasures of making the wrong ones:

*You know it never has been easy  
Whether you do or you do not resign  
Whether you travel the breadth of  
extremities*

*Or stick to some straighter line.*<sup>50</sup>

Travelling the breadth of extremities, Mitchell’s music should be allowed to move as it is: disruptive, expansive, and never straightforward.

## Endnotes

- 1 Joni Mitchell, ‘Joni on Point.’ Interview by Nic Harcourt. *Los Angeles Times*, June 7, 2009.
- 2 Joni Mitchell, ‘River.’ from *Blue*. Reprise, 1971.
- 3 *Love Actually* dir. Richard Curtis, Universal Pictures, 2003.
- 4 This attachment that will later play out in painful irony for Karen, when she receives a copy of Mitchell’s *Both Sides Now* from her husband instead of the necklace she thinks he has bought for her, which he has actually bought for his much younger secretary.
- 5 *The Kids Are All Right* dir. Lisa Cholodenko, Alliance Films, 2010.
- 6 ‘Backslide’ from *New Girl* dir. Nanette Burstein, 1:23, first aired May 1, 2012.
- 7 Sheila Weller in ‘The Joni Mitchell.Com Interview with Sheila Weller.’ Interview by Richard Flynn, Feb-

ruary 24, 2011. <http://jonimitchell.com/library/view.cfm?id=2356>

8 Mitchell's conversations with feminists will also be considered, especially her dialogue with Ani DiFranco.

9 Sheila Weller, *Girls Like Us: Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Carly Simon and the Journey of a Generation*, Ebury Press, 2008, 15.

10 Michelle Mercer, *Will You Take Me As I Am? Joni Mitchell's Blue Period*, Free Press: London, 2009, 3.

11 Joni Mitchell, 'Big Yellow Taxi' and 'Woodstock' both from *Ladies of the Canyon*, Reprise, 1970.

12 Joni Mitchell, 'My Old Man' from *Blue*.

13 Joni Mitchell, 'Sex Kills' from *Turbulent Indigo*, Asylum, 1994.

14 Weller records Mitchell saying, of her experience with polio, 'I think the creative process was an urgency then. It was a survival instinct.' *Girls Like Us*, 67.

15 Weller, 71.

16 See Weller, 206-15.

17 Joni Mitchell, 'Little Green' from *Blue*.

18 The title refers to the punitive institutions for unmarried mothers and women deemed 'errant' that existed throughout Europe but were known as the Magdalene laundries in Ireland. The last laundry closed in Ireland in 1996. There is an ongoing UN investigation into the laundries, see <http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/>.

19 Joni Mitchell, 'Magdalene Laundries' from *Turbulent Indigo*, Asylum, 1994.

20 Joni Mitchell, 'The Circle Game' from *Ladies of the Canyon*, Reprise, 1970.

21 Written 1966, recorded on *Hits*, Reprise, 1996.

22 Weller, 232.

23 For a discussion of these comparisons and Mitchell's response to them, see Kelly Boyer Sager, *The 1970s*. Westport: Greenwood, 2007, 169.

24 See Larry David Smith's *Elvis Costello, Joni Mitchell and the Torch Song Tradition*. Westport: Praeger, 2004, 28. In recent years, Mitchell's public relationship with Dylan has tended towards the fractious – see, for example: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/joni-mitchell-accuses-bob-dylan-of-plagiarism-1952970.html> in which Mitchell calls Dylan 'a plagiarist.'

25 David DeVoss, 'Rock 'n' Roll's Leading Lady.'

*Time*, December 16, 1974.

26 Stuart Henderson, 'All Pink and Clean and Full of Wonder?' Gendering 'Joni Mitchell,' 1966-74.' In *Left History*, 10:2, 83.

27 Mitchell has been outspoken about her distaste for the term 'confessional singer-songwriter': 'Augustine, Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath are confessional writers and all three make me sick.' Joni Mitchell, 'Make war not peace: Joni Mitchell attacks Joan 'break your legs' Baez.' Interview by Cahal Milmo, *Independent*, January 18, 2008.

28 Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-75*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1989, 15.

29 As Stuart Henderson has astutely commented, this period in Mitchell's career 'has been embraced for decades as the essential core 'Joni Mitchell'' even though her canon is incredibly diverse. Henderson, 83.

30 'Joni Mitchell's New Album Will Mean More To Some Than To Others.' *Rolling Stone*, May 14, 1970.

31 Ibid.

32 Joni Mitchell, 'Coyote.' *Hejira*, Asylum, 1976.

33 Bradford Martin, 'Cultural Politics and the Singer/Songwriters of the 1970s' in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*. Ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelitzer, Cambridge: Mass, 2004, 143.

34 Weller, 330.

35 'JoniMitchell.com Interview with Sheila Weller.'

36 Joni Mitchell in 'A Conversation with Joni Mitchell.' Interview by Jody Denberg, KGSR-FM, September 9, 1998.

37 Ani DiFranco, 'Ani DiFranco Chats With the Iconic Joni Mitchell.' *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 1998.

38 Joni Mitchell in 'Melancholy Meets the Infinite Sadness.' Interview by Morrissey, *Rolling Stone*, March 6, 1997.

39 In the interview with DiFranco, Mitchell also reiterates that she prefers the company of men to women.

40 'Woodstock' is perhaps an exception, as we shall see.

41 Deena Weinstein, 'Rock Protest Songs: So Many and So Few.' In *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music*

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44 Margot A. Henriksen, *Doctor Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age*. Berkeley: UCP, 1997, 383.

45 Joni Mitchell in 'A Conversation with Joni Mitchell.' Interview by David Wild, *Rolling Stone*, May 30, 1991.

46 Joni Mitchell in 'Peace, Memories, Dance.' Interview by John Mackie. *The Vancouver Sun*, January 15, 2010.

47 Joni Mitchell in 'Working Three Shifts, And Outrage Overtime.' Interview by David Yaffe. *New York Times*, February 4, 2007.

48 'Working Three Shifts, And Outrage Overtime.'

49 Joni Mitchell, 'Hejira.' *Hejira*.

50 Ibid.



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